



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Historic Site

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Historic Reserve

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## Fort Vancouver National Historic Site Media Release

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### **National Park Service Highlights Two Successive Nights in History at the Fort Vancouver Candlelight Tour**

September 15 & 16, 2006 (7:00 PM – 10:00 PM)

Vancouver, WA – Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, located in the heart of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve, is pleased to announce the details of the 2006 Fort Vancouver Candlelight Tour.

This year's Candlelight Tour, scheduled for the evenings of September 15 and 16, will focus on two consecutive evenings in the fort's history – almost exactly 160 years ago to the date. For the first time in the site's history, two successive evenings will be interpreted. This 'history in real time' will give visitors something unique to see each evening.

The first night of the event will focus on the relief effort provided by the fort for the shipwrecked crew of the U.S. Schooner *Shark* on September 13, 1846, and the second night of the event will be highlighted by the wrecked ship commander's return to the fort on the evening of September 14, 1846.


The 2006 Candlelight Tour will include many of the favorite features of the past – Company clerks will busily work on completing inventories in both the Fur Store and Indian Trade Shop. Yet, as always, the Candlelight Tour will offer new features that will help the visitors connect to the broader aspects of the fort's story.

"This year, we are unifying the Candlelight Tour around a specific – and exciting – two-day period in our history," explained Greg Shine, the site's Chief Ranger and Historian. "Using evidence from the historical record, we will interpret the fort's response to the wreck of the

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U.S.S. *Shark* and Lt. Howison's subsequent return to the fort almost exactly 160 years after they occurred."

On July 24, 1846, the U.S.S. *Shark*, commanded by Lt. Neil Howison, reached Fort Vancouver, where it was welcomed by Captain Baillie of the British Royal Navy and Chief Factor James Douglas of the Hudson's Bay Company. For the next 30 days, Howison and his crew explored the area's rivers, lands, and settlements, using Fort Vancouver as a base of operations. In September 1846, the U.S.S. *Shark* was wrecked on Clatsop Spit as it departed. In response, Fort Vancouver instigated a major relief effort in support of the *Shark*'s crew. The day after the fort began gathering supplies for a relief effort, Lt. Howison returned to the fort, informing the fort's officers of the harrowing details of his shipwreck and soliciting transportation and supplies for his beleaguered crew.

Inside the fort at the Candlelight Tour, conversations in the parlors of the Chief Factor's House will have a different focus than in past years, as on the first night the gentlemen will discuss the relief efforts and reflect on the *Shark*'s recent visit. The bakers, blacksmiths, and carpenters will be busily working on providing provisions and equipment for the shipwrecked crew.

Blacksmiths will be working late into the evening to fabricate chain for a possible salvage effort, and the Bake House ovens will be aglow as the French- Canadian baker works to provide sea biscuits for the shipwrecked sailors. Carpenters will work on crates and containers for the supplies to sail with the fort's launch the following morning. The kitchen employees will be doubly busy, cleaning up after super from the gentlemen's mess as well as for the shipwrecked sailors while preparing for the next day. On Saturday evening, Lt. Howison will return to the fort and share the details of his experience, while other colorful discussion topics will range from the upcoming horse races to American land squatters to the recent wheat harvest.


"Shifting the Candlelight Tour to a focus on 1846 is new for the site, and allows us to expand our programming immensely," noted park superintendent Tracy Fortmann. "By basing Candlelight Tour in 1846 rather than in 1845 as in past years," Chief Ranger Shine explained, "we can now interpret more of the major themes in our nation's history. Our participants can more fully discuss seminal national issues - - such as manifest destiny, war with Mexico, the annexation of Texas, and the Oregon Boundary issue - as well as local and regional issues, including the completion of the Barlow Road section of the Oregon Trail, the retirement of Dr. John McLoughlin to Oregon City, and the growing role of Fort Victoria."

Visitors can expect several other changes as well, including a new route through the Chief Factor's House that provides greater visitor access and improves the flow of the event.

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As in past years, prior to entering the fort, visitors will be able to stroll the popular timeline of living history. The timeline begins during early World War II and continues back to the earliest periods of local recorded history. The visitor will get a chance to interact with re-enactors portraying soldiers stationed at the post from several important eras. Taking a stroll down an Army company road with tents on each side of the path, the visitor will learn from the soldiers why they were at Vancouver and what they thought of duty at the post.

Further, back in time, Oregon Trail immigrants arrived at Fort Vancouver often in desperate need of assistance from the Hudson's Bay Company. Though it was against company policy, Dr. John McLoughlin, Chief Factor in charge of Fort Vancouver, helped many of these immigrants with food, supplies, and medical assistance. Candlelight Tour 2006 will feature Oregon Trail immigrants who will invite visitors into their camp to hear their story of a difficult journey and the surprising aid they found at the end of the trail.

At the final stop on the timeline, the visitors will meet a few of the workers of the fort who made it a place of surprising diversity in the early nineteenth century. Although the fort only had roughly 30 residents within its walls, the company village to the west of the stockade had upwards of 600 people living in it at peak times of the year. This multicultural neighborhood contained French- Canadians, Hawaiians, Scots, local Native peoples as well as members of the Iroquois and Delaware nations. It also contained a large number of people of mixed ancestry. The timeline will bring visitors into these village camps where they can join residents around a campfire. The residents will share their varied music and stories as well as play games and dance with the visitors.

Visitors are encouraged to carpool to the event, as parking in the area is limited. Event parking can be found along Fifth Street directly north of the fort, the Visitor Center parking lot located at 1501 East Evergreen Blvd., and available public parking areas within the Reserve.

**IMPORTANT: The fort hours of operation will be 11:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. from Friday, September 16th through Sunday, September 18th** to allow setup and clean- up time. During the day, admission fees will be charged. On both evenings, Friday and Saturday, the fort will reopen at 7:00 p.m. and entrance to the event is free. **The Visitor Center will be open from 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. all three days.**



**Background:** Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, a unit of the National Park Service, is at the heart of the Vancouver National Historic Reserve. The Vancouver National Historic Reserve brings together a national park, a premier archaeological site, the region's first military post, an international fur trade emporium, one of the oldest operating airfields, the first national historic site west of the Mississippi River, and a waterfront trail and environmental center on the banks of the Columbia River. The partners of the Reserve teach visitors about the fur trade, early military life, natural history, and pioneers in aviation, all within the context of Vancouver's role in regional and national development. The Reserve's vast array of public programs - - including living history events, festivals, cultural demonstrations, exhibits, active archaeology, and other special activities - - create a dynamic, fun, and unique tourist destination for people of all ages.

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